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Standards for Labour Force Statistics

Specifies ABS standards for the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of statistics on labour force variables

Reference period 2018

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Summary

This product presents statistical standards for the five core labour force variables:

- Labour force status
- Status in employment
- Hours worked
- Full-time/part-time status
- Duration of job search.

These variables are commonly used in a range of social and labour statistical collections. The standards are part of a series of statistical standards that the ABS is developing for the collection, processing and dissemination of variables in social, labour and demographic statistics.

This reference document describes the five core labour force variables and their associated conceptual issues and definitions. The standard for each variable includes the concept(s), definition(s), classification, coding structure, questionnaire modules and output categories used in ABS interviewer-based and self-enumerated collections.

These standards can be used by other government, academic and private sector organisations in their own statistical collections to improve the comparability of data.

Overview of the core labour force variables

Introduction

It is important for an economic and social understanding to be able to measure labour force characteristics of the population and changes which occur to those characteristics over time.

In the ABS the labour force characteristics of the population are measured and described through a group of variables. These core labour force variables are:

- Labour force status
- Status in employment
- Hours worked
- Full-time/part-time status
- Duration of job search.

The core labour force variables, when cross-classified with other social, economic and demographic variables, can provide comprehensive data on a particular topic, issue or population group. The resulting information can be used for a range of purposes, including:

- informed decision making and planning
- policy formulation and monitoring
- social and economic research and analysis, and
- program provision and evaluation.

The core variables form a coherent set, which jointly provide a detailed description of the

labour force.

Labour force questions are most commonly collected via household-based surveys. These surveys have strict time limits to minimise burden on householders and the cost of collecting the information, therefore the amount of content available for any one topic is limited. ABS Labour Force Survey (LFS) collects this information via specially trained interviewers using face-to-face and telephone interview collection methods, or by online self-enumeration. Labour force information is also collected in other household sample surveys, and in the Census of Population and Housing.

To accommodate the different levels of detail required, and the constraints of different collections, three conceptually comparable standard questionnaire modules have been developed.

- The Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module, which is used in the ABS LFS.
- The Household Survey Questionnaire Module, a shorter version used in all other relevant ABS Household Surveys.
- The Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module, which is best suited where labour force status is used as an explanatory variable (e.g. Census) or for use in administrative data collections.

A single question to establish labour force status can be used in administrative data collection, but is not considered a standard. For certain enumeration situations (e.g. remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities) a modified questionnaire format may also be used.

In all household-based surveys, Labour force status is the first of the core variables to be established when processing data on labour force activity. A derivation process is used to identify the Labour force status of each respondent. The derivation combines the responses to several questions according to a specified set of rules in order to correctly assign a classification code. Within the questionnaire module to establish Labour force status, the questions to determine Status in employment and Hours worked are also asked. Full-time/part-time status is derived from Hours worked. Additional questions have to be asked to determine Duration of job search.

The following table shows the variables contained in each of the three standard questionnaire modules, and the single question.

	Labour force status	Full-time/part-time status	Hours worked	Status in employment	Duration of job search
Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module	Yes	Yes	Both Actual and Usual Hours	Yes	Yes
Household Survey Questionnaire Module	Yes	Yes	Usual Hours	Yes	Yes
Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module	Yes	Yes	Actual Hours	Yes	No
Single Question	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

The five core labour force variables have interdependencies and cannot be measured separately, for example:

- Status in employment and Hours worked only apply to a person whose Labour Force Status is employed
- Full-time/part-time status only applies to a person whose Labour force status is employed or unemployed (in respect of what type of work they are looking for), and
- Duration of job search only applies to a person whose Labour force status is unemployed.

The development of standards for the individual core labour force variables and labour force questionnaire modules ensures comparable labour force data across a variety of ABS collections. This publication outlines the concept(s), definition(s), classifications, coding structure, questionnaire modules and output categories for each of the core labour force variables used in household-based collections conducted by the ABS.

The labour force framework

Introduction

The labour force is conceptually equivalent to the available supply of labour for economic production. It is a measure of the population undertaking economic activity, and the underlying concept of economic activity is consistent with that used in the Systems of National Accounts (see [Australian System of National Accounts: Concepts, Sources and Methods](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5216.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5216.0>) (cat. no. 5216.0)).

The labour force framework classifies the in-scope population into three mutually exclusive categories at a given point in time: employed, unemployed and not in the labour force. The employed and unemployed categories together make up the labour force which gives a measure of the number of persons contributing to, or willing to contribute to, the supply of labour at that time. The third category, not in the labour force, represents the balance of the

in-scope population.

Labour force concepts and definitions used by the ABS align closely with the standards and guidelines outlined in the resolutions of [International Conference of Labour Statisticians](https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/lang--en/index.htm) (<https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/lang--en/index.htm>) (ICLS) and the [International Labour Organisation](https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm) (<https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>) (ILO) manuals and guidelines.

The Australian labour force framework is detailed in [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6102.0.55.001) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6102.0.55.001>) (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001).

International comparability

The ABS aims to fully adopt international standards where they are applicable to the Australian situation, and therefore the standards detailed in this product closely align with the international standards as described in resolutions of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). The International Labour Organisation (ILO), in its manual Surveys of Economically Active Population, Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment, discusses the rationale for the concepts underlying the standard measures. The manual also provides guidelines on methods for their collection, by means of population censuses and surveys.

The concept of the labour force and definitions of employment and unemployment are defined in the 13th ICLS resolution (1982) concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment, which has more recently been revised in the 19th ICLS resolution (2013) concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilisation. The Australian definitions fully align with the 13th ICLS resolution with the exception that people who are engaged in production of goods for own final consumption are not explicitly included in the ABS definition of employment. The Australian definitions align with the definitions in the 19th ICLS for employment, unemployment and the labour force, apart from the definition of employment which has not yet been updated to reflect changes to the criteria to determine continued job attachment for people employed but not at work in the reference week. The ABS plans to make these changes to the standard in the coming years, and will revise the standard accordingly at that time. In both the 13th and 19th ICLS resolutions regular members of the armed forces are included in employment, however they are out of scope of the ABS LFS.

The International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) is described in the 15th ICLS resolution (1993) of that name. The Australian Status in employment standard is consistent with the international classification with two exceptions:

- members of producer cooperatives are not included as a separate category, and
- the latest review of the Australian standard has moved away from an explicit distinction between paid employment and self-employment, which is present in the ICSE.

Further, the ICSE recognises the issue with the treatment of Owner managers of incorporated enterprises (described in detail in the Status in employment standard) and whether they are in paid employment or self-employment; however, the ICSE is not definitive as to their treatment. This was a consideration in having this group separate in the Australian standard.

The concepts of hours worked (including actual hours worked, usual hours worked and hours paid for) are described in the 18th ICLS resolution (2008) concerning the measurement of working time. The Australian standard fully aligns with the concepts and definitions in this resolution.

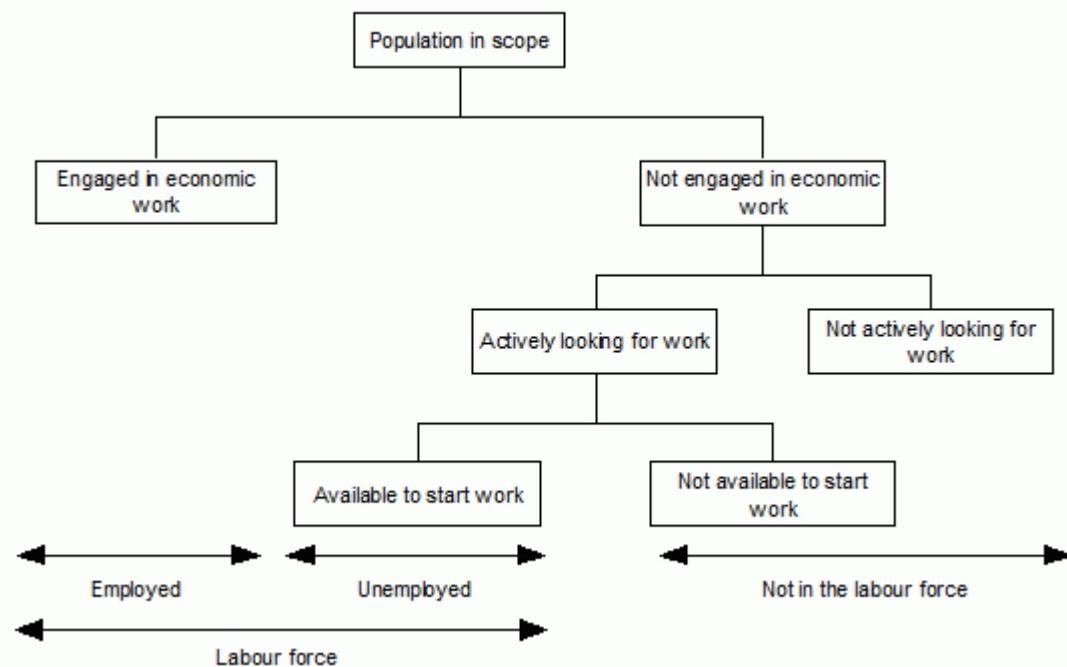
Full-time/part-time status is not explicitly defined in terms of hours worked in ICLS resolutions.

Duration of search for employment is defined in the 19th ICLS resolution (2013), and the Australian standard is fully consistent with this definition.

The conceptual framework

The following diagram illustrates the labour force conceptual framework, which classifies the population into employed, unemployed and not in the labour force.

Figure 1 - the labour force conceptual framework



Certain rules are required for classifying the population into the categories of employed, unemployed and not in the labour force. These rules cover three areas (to be working or available for work):

- a reference period of one week
- the classification of the population based on activities performed during the reference period, and
- the use of priority rules to ensure that each person is classified into only one of the three basic categories.

In order to measure the labour force the concept of economic activity has to be operationalised and an appropriate set of objective questions used to identify those who are engaged in economic work, or looking for work and available for work. The questions are tested to ensure they are easily understood by the respondent to obtain accurate data.

The labour force questionnaire modules

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the official source for Australian employment and unemployment statistics. It uses a comprehensive and detailed set of questions to precisely measure the numbers and certain characteristics of persons in employment and unemployment, which is the labour force. The questionnaire module as used in the LFS is presented in [Information Paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, 2014 \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6232.0>\)](#) (cat. no. 6232.0), which is referred to as the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module in this publication.

In other household surveys, where Labour force status is used as an explanatory or classificatory variable, it is generally not practical to determine employment and unemployment as precisely as it is in the LFS. A shorter module, referred to as the Household Survey Questionnaire Module, is used in most other ABS household surveys to produce estimates of Labour force status.

There is also a labour force module in the Census of Population and Housing, referred to as the Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module. This module is shorter than the Household Survey Questionnaire module, and is generally used through a self-enumeration mode.

Aggregates produced from sample surveys and the Census which do not use the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module are designed to be consistent with the international concepts of employment and unemployment. However, the treatment of certain small population groups is simpler than that used in the LFS. Consequently, there are differences between estimates produced from the LFS and those produced from the Census or from surveys using the alternative modules.

Collection methods

The core labour force variables are collected in household sample surveys and the Census by using one of the three standard questionnaire modules (Labour Force Survey, Household Survey and Census of Population and Housing).

A number of collection methods are used to collect information using the three questionnaire modules. These include computer assisted facilitated interview and self-enumeration options. Where interviewers conduct the surveys, they can be conducted either face-to-face or over the phone. Online self-enumeration was introduced to the LFS from December 2012. The Census has been predominantly collected via self-enumeration, with the option of online self-enumeration available since 2011.

In the LFS, and the Census, 'any responsible adult' respondent methodology is predominantly used. This involves one adult in the household providing the answers to the questionnaires for all people in the household who are in-scope. Personal interviewing, where the subject of the questionnaire provides the responses (self-reporting), is generally used in other ABS household surveys.

The following table shows the different questionnaire modules and the different collection methods generally used.

Table 1 - questionnaire modules and their collection methods

Questionnaire module	Collection methods		
	Interviewer-administered/ self-enumeration	Face-to-face/ phone interview	Respondent type
Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module	Computer assisted interviewing and online self-enumeration	Predominantly phone interview (first month often face-to-face)	Any responsible adult methodology
Household Survey Questionnaire Module	Computer assisted interviewing	Face-to-face	Personal interview - self-reporting
Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module	Self-enumeration - either pen and paper or online	N/A (self-enumeration)	Any responsible adult methodology

Labour force status

Introduction

Measuring the labour force characteristics of the population and the changes which occur over time are important from both an economic and social perspective. The ABS Labour Force Survey (LFS) and its associated supplementary surveys are the main and most important sources of information about the Australian labour force. This information is further supplemented by information obtained from the five yearly Census of Population and Housing, the various Special Social Surveys (SSSs), employer surveys, and administrative data.

Labour force status classifies the in-scope population into three mutually exclusive categories at a given point in time: employed, unemployed and not in the labour force. The employed and unemployed categories together make up the labour force, which gives a measure of the number of persons contributing to, or willing and able to contribute to, the supply of labour at that time and aligns with concepts in the System of National Accounts (SNA). The third category not in the labour force represents the balance of the in-scope population.

Definitions used by the ABS align closely with international standards and guidelines, as described in the section on International Comparability.

The name of the variable is Labour force status.

Underlying concepts

Nominal definition

Labour force status is a classification of the relevant population into employed, unemployed or not in the labour force. The definitions align with the international standards adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians.

Operational definition

Labour force status is measured by establishing whether a person is employed, unemployed or not in the labour force (according to the relevant definitions) during a specified reference week.

Labour force status is established according to a set of priority rules where employment takes precedence over unemployment, and unemployment over not in the labour force. The priority rules provide an unambiguous and mutually exclusive labour force status, regardless of other activities that may be undertaken at the same time. For example, a person at work may also be actively seeking other employment. They are currently contributing to economic production and they are therefore classified as employed, despite their job search activities.

The ABS uses Labour force status for classifying the Australian population according to their labour market activity. The ABS Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides the official estimates of Labour force status. Labour force status is derived by asking a series of questions about a person's work-related activities, job search activities, and availability for work in the relevant reference period. The LFS collects Labour force status for the usually resident civilian population aged 15 years and over.

The criteria for determining a person's Labour force status are (broadly) as follows:

- whether a person has work (economic work for which payment is received such as wages, salary, profit, commission or payment-in-kind). Unpaid activities such as unpaid domestic work and volunteer community services are excluded, and
- whether those who do not have work are:
 - actively looking for work, and
 - available to start work.

The determination of Labour force status from these criteria is:

- a person who has work is classified as employed and hence in the labour force
- a person who is without work, actively looking for work, and available to start work is

- classified as unemployed and hence in the labour force, and
- a person classified as neither employed nor unemployed is classified as not in the labour force.

Reflecting these criteria, the definitions of employed, unemployed and not in the labour force used by the ABS in the LFS are outlined below.

Employed

Employed are defined as persons who, during the reference week:

- worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind, in a job or business or on a farm (comprising employees and owner managers), or
- worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (i.e. contributing family workers), or
- were employees who had a job but were not at work and were:
 - away from work for fewer than four weeks up to the end of the reference week, or
 - away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four week period to the end of the reference week, or
 - away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement, or
 - on strike or locked out, or
 - on workers' compensation and expected to be returning to their job, or
- were owner managers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.

Unemployed

Unemployed are defined as persons who were not employed during the reference week, and:

- had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and were available for work in the reference week, or
- were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week, and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

Not in the labour force

Persons not in the labour force are defined as persons who were neither employed nor

unemployed, as defined. They may include:

- persons who were performing home duties or caring for children, or
- retired or voluntarily inactive, or
- permanently unable to work, or
- persons in institutions (boarding schools, hospitals, gaols, sanatoriums, etc.), or
- members of contemplative religious orders, or
- persons whose only activity during the reference week was jury service or unpaid voluntary work.

Persons working without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a related person are termed contributing family workers. They are classified as employed if they worked one hour or more in the reference week, and as either unemployed or not in the labour force if they did not work during the reference week, depending on their job search activity and availability.

Limitations of the different questionnaire modules

In comparison with labour force estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the use of the Household Survey Questionnaire Module or the Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module can result in higher estimates of employed, lower estimates of unemployed and higher estimates of persons not in the labour force. This arises from the simplified treatment of certain categories of persons:

- the shorter questionnaire modules do not ask respondents who were not available to start work the reasons they were not available during the reference week. Therefore, the reduced questionnaire modules do not identify persons who looked for work in the four weeks to the end of the reference week but were not available to start work in the reference week because they were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week (and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available). These persons are classified as 'future starters'. Using the reduced questionnaire module such persons are classified as not in the labour force rather than as unemployed.
- in the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module, persons on workers' compensation 'last week' and not returning (or who do not know if they will be returning to work), persons working without pay in a family business (contributing family workers) who are away from work, and persons away from work for four weeks or more without pay, are classified as either unemployed or not in the labour force. Where the reduced questionnaire module is used, all persons absent from work, but who usually work one hour or more a week, are classified as employed.

The module used in the Census of Population and Housing has fewer questions than the Household Survey Questionnaire Module. Similarly, the use of the Census questions also produces different estimates of Labour Force Status, compared with the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Differences result from two factors:

- the shortened set of questions (as described above) cannot determine Labour Force Status as precisely as the LFS. As a result, Labour Force Status from the Census is best used as an explanatory variable to explain other phenomena, rather than for detailed analysis of the labour force itself.
- higher levels of item non-response in the Census, which is generally associated with the widespread use of self-enumeration methodology. For more information see [A Comparison of the Census and the Labour Force Survey \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2900.0main+features101432016>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2900.0main+features101432016).

More detailed discussion of the differences between the Labour Force Survey and other Household Surveys is presented in [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6102.0.55.001>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6102.0.55.001) (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001).

Collection methods

Collection of variables

The three questionnaire modules for labour force data are detailed below:

- the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module, used in the ABS Labour Force Survey (interviewer administered or online collections).
- the Household Survey Questionnaire Module, a shorter module used in other relevant ABS household surveys (usually interviewer administered).
- the Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module, used in the Census and is suitable for use in administrative data collections conducted by agencies other than the ABS.

Scope

The variable Labour force status is applicable to all persons in the survey population.

Labour force status is an attribute of the measurement unit person.

Questionnaire modules

Household based surveys

The standard ABS modules for household based surveys are:

Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module - The full Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module is used in the LFS. Full details can be found in [Information Paper: Questionnaires Used in the Labour Force Survey](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6232.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6232.0>) (cat. no. 6232.0). This document provides detailed guidelines for deriving labour force status from the LFS questionnaire. This version of the questionnaire was implemented into the ABS LFS from July 2014.

Household Survey Questionnaire Module - The Household Survey Questionnaire module is recommended for household based surveys and comprises 15 questions. Sequencing ensures that all 15 questions will never be asked of any individual. For the vast majority, only five questions will be asked for those who have a job or eight for those who are unemployed and four for those who are not in the labour force. There are additional questions asked of a small but significant minority of respondents. These are necessary to ensure a sufficiently accurate measure of the concepts. Although there are only 15 questions, they are numbered 1-17 as two introductory statements (Q.1 and Q.6) are included and are given question numbers in line with ABS survey operation conventions.

The household survey questionnaire module

Questions 2-4 and 12-15 are used to determine Labour force status.

Q.1. I WOULD LIKE TO ASK ABOUT LAST WEEK, THAT IS, THE WEEK STARTING SUNDAY THE AND
ENDING (LAST SATURDAY THE /YESTERDAY.)

Q.2. LAST WEEK DID DO ANY WORK AT ALL IN A JOB, BUSINESS OR FARM?

Yes **Go to Q.5**

No

Permanently unable to work **No More Questions**

Permanently not intending to work (if aged 65 + only) **No More Questions**

Q.3. LAST WEEK DID DO ANY WORK WITHOUT PAY IN A FAMILY BUSINESS?

Yes **Go to Q.5**

No

Permanently not intending to work (if aged 65 + only) **No More Questions**

Q.4. DID ... HAVE A JOB, BUSINESS OR FARM THAT ... WAS AWAY FROM BECAUSE OF HOLIDAYS,
SICKNESS OR ANY OTHER REASON?

Yes

No **Go to Q.13**

Permanently not intending to work (if aged 65 + only) **No More Questions**

Q.5. DID ... HAVE MORE THAN ONE JOB OR BUSINESS LAST WEEK?

Yes

No **Go to Q.7**

Q.6. THE NEXT FEW QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT THE JOB OR BUSINESS IN WHICH ... USUALLY WORKS THE
MOST HOURS.

Q.7. DO/DOES ... WORK FOR AN EMPLOYER, OR IN ... OWN BUSINESS

Employer

Own business **Go to Q.10**

Other/Uncertain **Go to Q.9**

Q.8 ARE/IS ... PAID A WAGE OR SALARY, OR SOME OTHER FORM OF PAYMENT

Wage/Salary **Go to Q.12**

Other/Uncertain

Q.9. WHAT ARE ... (WORKING/PAYMENT) ARRANGEMENTS?

Unpaid voluntary work **Go to Q.13**

Unpaid trainee work **Go to Q.13**

Contractor/Subcontractor

Own business/Partnership

Commission only **Go to Q.12**

Commission with retainer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.12
In a family business without pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.12
Payment in kind	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.12
Paid by the piece/item produced	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.12
Wage/salary earner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.12
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.12

Q.10. DO/DOES ... HAVE EMPLOYEES (IN THAT BUSINESS)?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.11. IS THAT BUSINESS INCORPORATED?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.12. HOW MANY HOURS DO/DOES ... USUALLY WORK EACH WEEK IN (THAT JOB/THAT BUSINESS/ALL ... JOBS)?

1 hour or more	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Less than 1 hour/no hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.13

Industry and Occupation questions for the employed population would be included here if required. Otherwise no more questions.

Q.13. AT ANY TIME DURING THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAVE/HAS ... BEEN LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME WORK?

Yes, full-time work only	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Yes, part-time work only	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Yes, either full-time or part-time work	<input type="checkbox"/>	
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	No More Questions

Q.14. AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAVE/HAS ...

WRITTEN, PHONED OR APPLIED TO AN EMPLOYER FOR WORK?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.15
HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH AN EMPLOYER FOR WORK?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.15
ANSWERED AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR A JOB?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.15
LOOKED IN NEWSPAPERS, ON THE INTERNET OR CHECKED NOTICE BOARDS?		
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
BEEN REGISTERED WITH CENTRELINK AS A JOBSEEKER?		
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
CHECKED OR REGISTERED WITH AN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go to Q.15

TAKEN ANY STEPS TO PURCHASE OR START YOUR OWN BUSINESS? [Go to Q.15](#)

DONE ANYTHING ELSE TO FIND A JOB?

Advertised or tendered for work [Go to Q.15](#)

Contacted friends/relatives [Go to Q.15](#)

Other [No More Questions](#)

Only looked in newspapers, on the internet or checked notice boards, and/or Only registered with Centrelink as a jobseeker [No More Questions](#)

None of these [No More Questions](#)

Q.15. IF ... HAD FOUND A JOB COULD ... HAVE STARTED WORK LAST WEEK?

Yes

No [No More Questions](#)

Don't know

Q.16. WHEN DID ... BEGIN LOOKING FOR WORK?

Enter Date

Less than 2 years ago/...../...../

DD MM YY

2 years to less than 5 years ago/...../...../

DD MM YY

5 years or more ago/...../...../

DD MM YY

Did not look for work

Q.17. WHEN DID ... LAST WORK?

Enter Date

Less than 2 years ago/...../...../

DD MM YY

2 years to less than 5 years ago/...../...../

DD MM YY

5 years or more ago/...../...../

DD MM YY

Has never worked

Census of Population and Housing questionnaire module

Following is the full Census of Population and Housing labour force module. Questions 1, 6 and 7 are used to determine Labour force status.

LAST WEEK, DID YOU HAVE A FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME JOB OF ANY KIND?

- Q.1. (A 'job' means any type of work including casual, temporary or part-time work, if it was for one hour or more.)

Yes, worked for payment or profit

Yes, but absent on holidays, on paid leave,
on strike or temporarily stood down

Yes, unpaid work in a family business **Go to Industry/Occupation
questions (if required) otherwise**
Go to Q5

Yes, other unpaid work **Go to Q6**

No, did not have job **Go to Q6**

IN THE MAIN JOB HELD LAST WEEK, WERE YOU:

- Q.2. (If you had more than one job last week then 'main job' refers to the job in which you usually work the most hours.)

Working for an employer? **Go to Industry/Occupation
questions (if required) otherwise**
Go to Q5

Working in own business

Q.3 WAS YOUR BUSINESS:

Unincorporated?

Incorporated (e.g. Pty Ltd)?

Q.4 DOES YOUR BUSINESS EMPLOY PEOPLE?

No, no employees (other than owner/s)

Yes, 1-19 employees

Yes, 20 or more employees

Industry and Occupation questions for the employed population would be included here if required. Otherwise go to Q5.

Q.5. LAST WEEK, HOW MANY HOURS DID YOU WORK IN ALL JOBS?

(Add any overtime or extra time worked and subtract any time off.)

Hours worked

None

DID YOU ACTIVELY LOOK FOR WORK AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS?

(Examples of actively looking for work include: checking or registering with an employment agency;

- Q.6. writing, telephoning or applying in person to an employer for work; having a job interview; taking steps to purchase or start a business; or advertising for work.)

No, did not look for work

Yes, looked for full-time work

Yes, looked for part-time work

Q.7. IF YOU HAD FOUND A JOB, COULD YOU HAVE STARTED WORK LAST WEEK?

Yes, could have started work last week	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, already had a job to go to	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, temporarily ill or injured	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, other reason	<input type="checkbox"/>

Single question - It is recognised that the standard ABS question modules may be difficult to implement in some administrative settings where there is a requirement to collect information on labour force activities from clients for client profiling or service provision analysis. If this is the case, a single question is suggested to promote comparability of data collected as a product of administrative activities of that nature.

It should be noted that the single question module is not an ABS standard and is not used in ABS statistical collections. As this question is reliant of the respondent or client's own perception of his or her labour force activities and on that person's understanding of the words for labour force concepts used in the question, its accuracy is very limited. It may nevertheless be useful for agencies which require a broad understanding of the labour force profile of their clientele but cannot use the seven question approach of the ABS Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module standard.

Q.1. OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES, WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CURRENT LABOUR FORCE STATUS

Mark one box only.

Full-time employee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part-time employee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-employed - not employing others	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-employed - employing others	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employed - unpaid worker in a family business	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed - seeking full-time work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed - seeking part-time work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not employed - not seeking employment	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note that if data on the full-time/part-time status of the unemployed are not required, the two unemployed categories may be combined as "Unemployed - seeking full-time or part-time work". It is important to emphasise in the question that to be unemployed one has to be looking for work.

In addition to the question modules stated in this standard, for certain enumeration situations (e.g. remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities) a modified questionnaire format may be used. Details of these circumstances can be provided on request, please contact labour.statistics@abs.gov.au (<mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>?)

[subject=Labour%20Force%20Survey\)..](#)

Derivation procedures

Labour force status is derived by asking a series of questions about a person's work related activities in the reference period. The derivation procedure is different for each questionnaire module.

For the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module:

- employed persons are those who respond (in Q19 to Q21) that they worked in a job, business or farm, or in a family business without pay, or that they had a job they were away from in the reference week; and
 - worked in a job, business or farm, or in a family business without pay, for one hour or more in the reference week (as reported in Q44); or
 - were away from work during the reference week (or worked less than one hour during the reference week), but maintained job attachment in the reference week, and usually works one hour or more, as determined in Q69.
- unemployed persons are those who did not have a job but had been looking for work in the four weeks to the end of the reference week (as reported in Q22 and Q23), and people who, although they report that they have a job, fail to satisfy the employed criteria as specified above. In order for a person to be classified as unemployed:
 - took an active step to find work in the four weeks to the end of the reference week, that is, answer one of the questions in Q88A, Q88B, Q88C, Q88F, Q88G, or codes 1 or 2 in Q88H, and was available to start work in the reference week (including 'Don't know' responses) determined by Q89; or
 - was waiting to start a job they had already obtained, as reported in Q25, Q90 or Q93, and would be starting that work within four weeks as reported in Q91 or Q94, and could have started in the reference week if the work had been available then as reported in Q95.
- persons not in the labour force are derived as the residual population who do not meet the criteria to be classified as either employed or unemployed.

For the Household Survey Questionnaire Module:

- employed persons are those who respond 'yes' to either Q2, Q3 or Q4 and have worked more than 1 hour as reported in Q12;
- unemployed persons are those who respond 'no' to Q2, Q3 and Q4, answer 'yes' to Q13,

indicate in Q14 that they have been engaged in active job search, and answer 'yes' or 'don't know' to Q15;

- persons not in the labour force are derived as the residual population, not identified as employed or unemployed.

For the Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module:

- employed persons are those who answer 'yes, worked for payment or profit'; 'yes, but absent on holidays, on paid leave, on strike or temporarily stood down'; or 'yes, unpaid work in a family business' in Q1.
- unemployed persons are those who answer 'yes' in Q6 and 'yes' in Q7.
- persons not in the labour force are derived as the residual population, not identified as employed or unemployed.

Classification and coding

Coding

The classification criteria

The criteria used in classifying units in the classification are:

- whether a person did any productive work or had a job in the reference period
- whether those who do not have a job are actively seeking work, and
- whether those who are actively seeking work are available to start work.

The standard classification

The standard classification is a one level classification comprising three categories:

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Not in the labour force

The code structure

The code structure of the classification is:

1. Employed
 2. Unemployed
 3. Not in the labour force
-

Output

Output categories

The standard classification

The standard classification is:

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Not in the labour force

The categories employed and unemployed can be aggregated to form the total labour force. It may be useful for certain types of social analysis to combine the categories unemployed and not in the labour force to form the category not employed; this output label should always be footnoted with unemployed or not in the labour force.

Status in employment

Introduction

Status in employment is a classification of employed persons according to the nature of their relationship with the enterprise in which they work.

The concepts and definitions relating to the measurement of Status in employment are detailed in the [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/6102.0.55.001~Feb%202018~Main%20Features~Employment~4>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/6102.0.55.001~Feb%202018~Main%20Features~Employment~4) (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001).

The standard term for the variable is Status in employment.

The term Status in employment is used in the international standard as outlined in the [International Classification of Status in Employment \(\[http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/standards-and-guidelines/resolutions-adopted-by-international-conferences-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_087562/lang--en/index.htm\]\(http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/standards-and-guidelines/resolutions-adopted-by-international-conferences-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_087562/lang--en/index.htm\)\)](http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/standards-and-guidelines/resolutions-adopted-by-international-conferences-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_087562/lang--en/index.htm) (15th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, 1993).

The term employment status should be avoided as it is easily confused with the concept of Labour force status. The classification employment type has previously been used by the ABS but is now redundant as the groups identified within the employment type classification are now specified in Status in employment.

Status in employment is an attribute of the measurement unit job.

Underlying concepts

Nominal definition

Status in employment is determined by an employed person's position in relation to their job, and is usually collected in respect of a person's main job if they hold more than one job. The Australian Status in employment classification classifies employed persons according to the reported relationship between the person and the enterprise for which they work, together with the legal status of the enterprise where this can be established.

The groups distinguished in the Australian classification are:

- Employee: a person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages, salary, on a commission basis (with or without a retainer), tips, piece rates, or payment-in-kind, and who does not operate his or her own incorporated or unincorporated enterprise
- Owner manager of incorporated enterprise (OMIE) with employees: a person who operates his or her own incorporated enterprise, that is, a business entity which is registered as a separate legal entity to its members or owners (also known as limited liability company), and hires one or more employees in addition to themselves and/or other owners of that business
- Owner manager of incorporated enterprise (OMIE) without employees: a person who operates his or her own incorporated enterprise, that is, a business entity which is registered as a separate legal entity to its members or owners (also known as a limited liability company), and hires no employees apart from themselves or other owners of that business
- Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise (OMUE) with employees: a person who operates his or her own unincorporated enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more employees in addition to themselves and/or other owners of that business
- Owner manager or unincorporated enterprise (OMUE) without employees: a person who operates his or her own unincorporated enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees apart from themselves or other owners of that business
- Contributing family worker: a person who works without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative.

Operational definition

Status in employment is measured by determining if a person is (as defined in the nominal

definition):

- an employee
- an owner manager of incorporated enterprise with employees
- an owner manager of incorporated enterprise without employees
- an owner manager of unincorporated enterprise with employees
- an owner manager of unincorporated enterprise without employees, or
- a contributing family worker.

The questions in the three standard Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Modules are sufficiently detailed to assign an employed person to one of these mutually exclusive groups.

Discussion of issues

In previous versions of this standard there was a clear distinction between paid employment (formerly defined as employees which comprised employees and OMIEs as listed above) and self-employment (the last three groups, previously labelled employers, own account workers and contributing family workers). This clear distinction reflected a strong link to the concept of compensation or employees within the System of National Accounts, where wages and salaries of OMIEs are within compensation of employees. Further, the classification was based on the legal distinction between individuals and the business in which they worked. The review of this standard recognised that while remuneration of OMIEs can be similar to employees, the other employment arrangements and characteristics are more similar to OMUEs than employees, as is the degree of control that they have over the business operations. While the current version removes the clear distinction between paid employment and self-employment, the new structure provides flexibility for users to group the categories in the standard in the way most suitable for analysis. For example, grouping OMIEs with employees when looking at the National Accounts concept of compensation of employees, or grouping OMIEs with OMUEs when looking at employment arrangements, or those who own a business with employees can be compared to those without employees. The terms self-employed and self-employment are no longer defined in this standard.

The review of the standard recognised that treating people who are paid commission without a retainer as not an employee was on the basis of their remuneration, rather than on the relationship between the person and the business. As a result, the current version includes people who are paid commission without a retainer as an employee. This group represents a very small proportion of the total employed and is not likely to result in a

significant difference to estimates of people in the different categories of Status in employment.

Collection methods

Collection of variable

Status in employment is collected in household collections. Each of the three labour force status questionnaire modules include questions to derive Status in employment, which are:

- the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module, used in the ABS Labour Force Survey (interviewer administered or online collections).
- the Household Survey Questionnaire Module, a shorter module used in all other relevant ABS household surveys (interviewer administered).
- the Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module, used in the Census and is suitable for use in administrative data collections conducted by agencies other than the ABS.

Scope

The variable Status in employment is applicable to all employed persons as defined in the Labour Force Status operational definition. It can also be relevant to persons not employed in reference to a previous job.

Questionnaire modules

Household based surveys

In the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module, the set of questions to measure Status in employment are questions 30-38 (for employed persons at work in the reference week), and questions 54-62 (for employed persons away from work in the reference week).

The full labour force module is given in [Information Paper: Questionnaires used in the Labour Force Survey, 2014 \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6232.0>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6232.0) (cat. no. 6232.0). The version of this questionnaire was implemented into the LFS from July 2014.

In the Household Survey Questionnaire Module, the set of questions to measure Status in employment are questions 6-11. They are identical to the questions used in the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module.

If data on Status in employment are not required, questions 6-11 of the Household Survey Questionnaire Module can be omitted.

The Household Questionnaire Module is detailed in the Labour Force Status section.

Census of Population and Housing questionnaire module

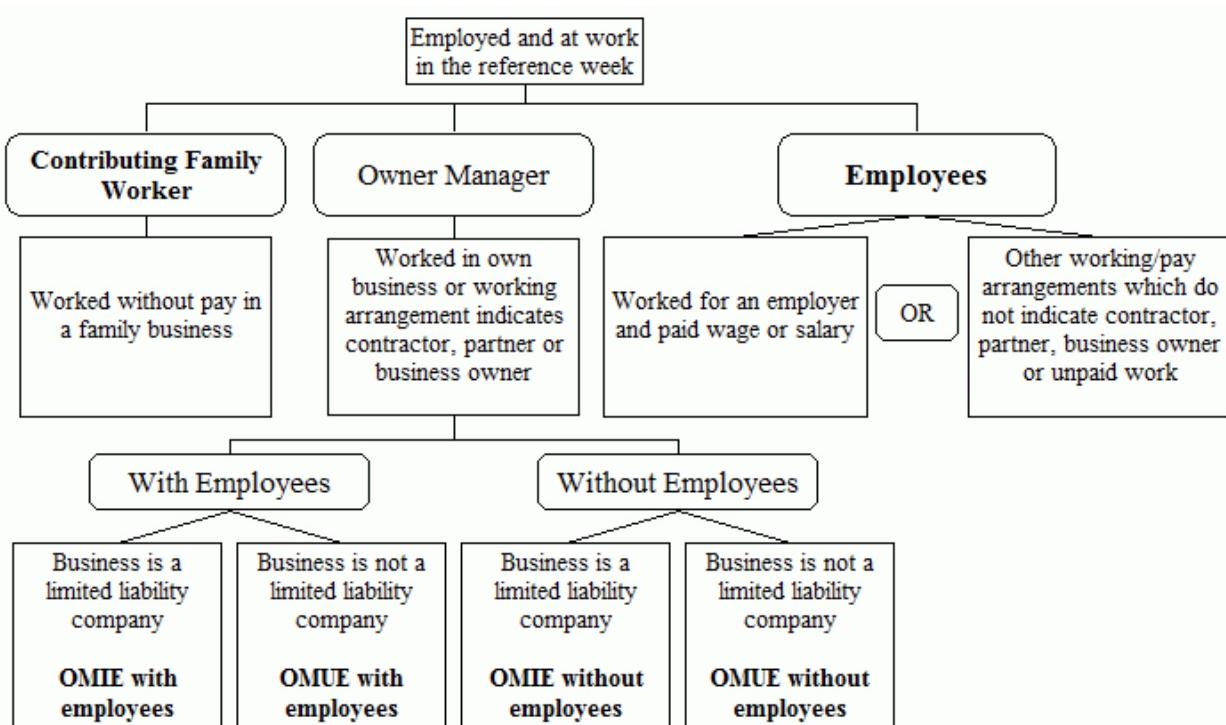
The relevant questions to measure Status in employment for the Census of Population and Housing are questions 1-4.

The full Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module is detailed in the Labour Force Status section.

Derivation procedures

The derivation procedure for Status in employment is quite complex. The following diagram provides an overview of how people are categorised based on their situation. Full details of the derivation including question numbers and response codes are in the Appendix.

Figure 2 - Labour Force Survey questionnaire module



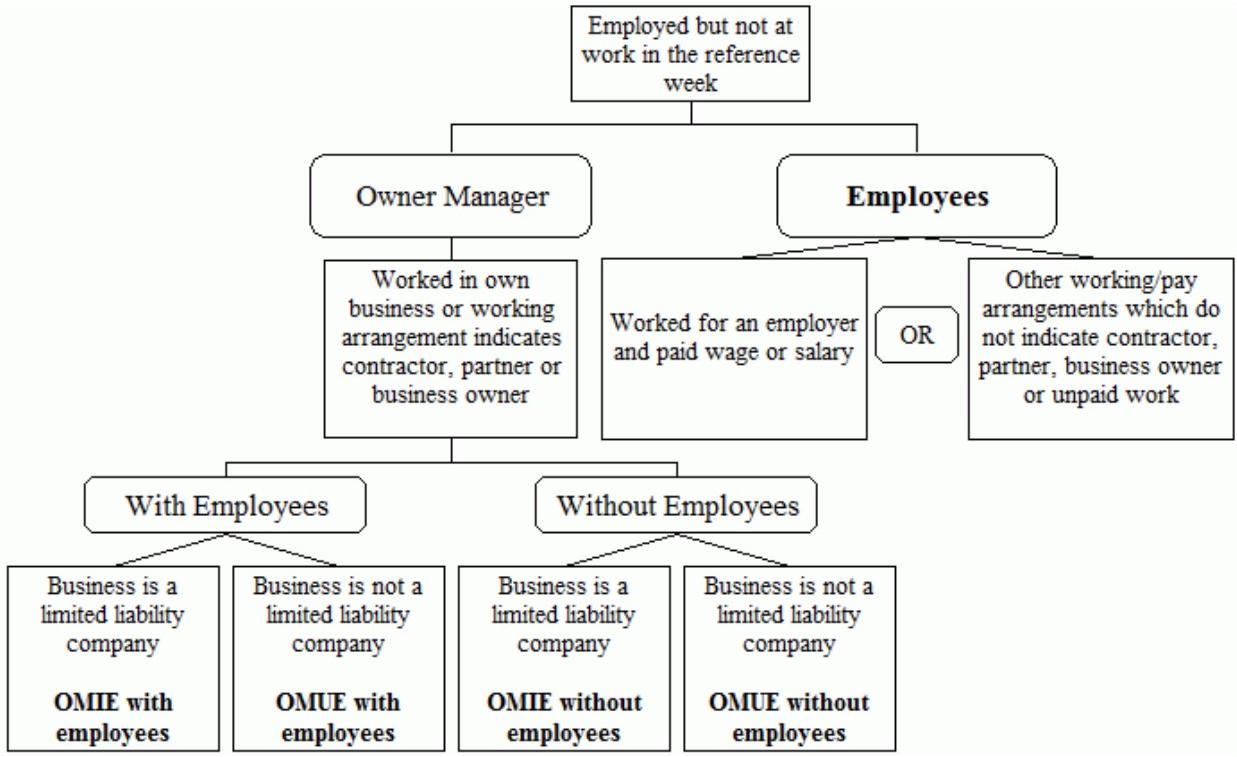


Figure 3 - household survey questionnaire module

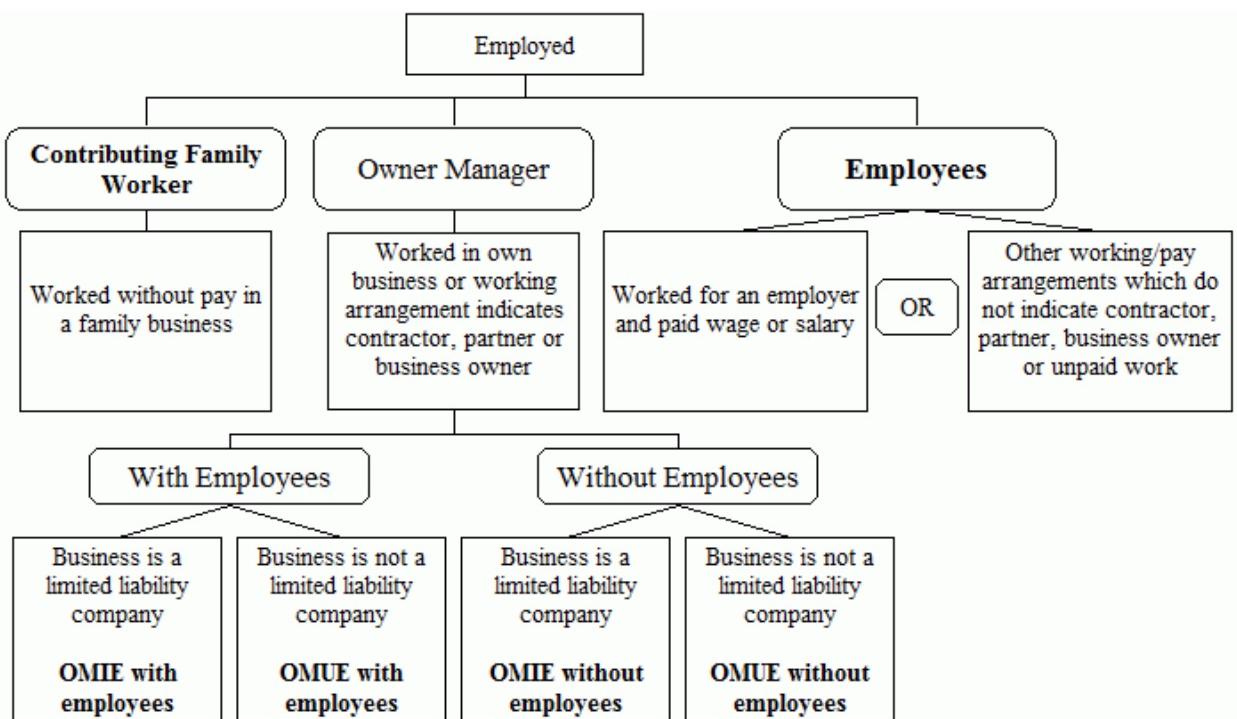
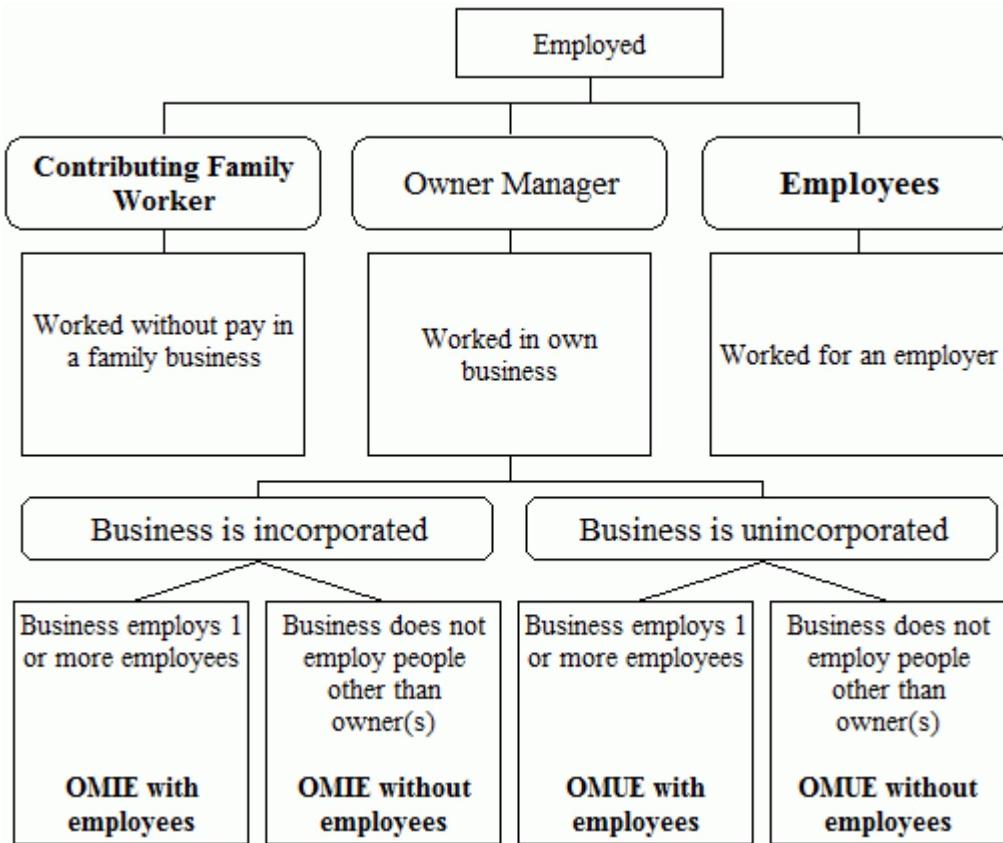


Figure 4 - Census questionnaire module



Classification and coding

Input classification

The standard classification used is a one level classification comprising six categories:

- Employee
- Owner manager of incorporated enterprise with employees
- Owner manager of incorporated enterprise without employees
- Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise with employees
- Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise without employees
- Contributing family worker

Coding indexes

The structure of the classification is:

1. Employee
2. Owner manager of incorporated enterprise with employees
3. Owner manager of incorporated enterprise without employees
4. Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise with employees

5. Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise without employees
 6. Contributing family worker
-

Output

Output classification

The standard classification is:

- Employee
- Owner manager of incorporated enterprise with employees
- Owner manager of incorporated enterprise without employees
- Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise with employees
- Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise without employees
- Contributing family worker

To ensure consistency with the [System of National Accounts \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5216.0>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5216.0), the Employee, Owner manager of incorporated enterprise with employees, and Owner manager of incorporated enterprise without employees series should be combined to provide estimates consistent with compensation of employees within the National Accounts.

It is permissible to aggregate the two Owner manager of incorporated enterprises categories (with and without employees) into a single Owner managers of incorporated enterprises category, similarly for the two Owner managers of unincorporated enterprises categories (with and without employees). It is also permissible to aggregate the two categories Owner managers of incorporated enterprises with employees and Owner managers of unincorporated enterprises with employees into a single category Owner managers with employees, and similarly for the categories of owner managers without employees, provided it is clearly labelled.

Appendix

Status in employment derivations

For the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module

- employees are those who
 - ((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q19)) AND ((worked for an employer (code 1 in Q30) AND received remuneration in wages or salary

(code 1 in Q31)) OR
(their working/payment arrangement was either commission only, OR commission with a retainer, OR payment in kind, OR paid by the piece/item produced, OR wage or salary earner OR other (code 14 or 15 or 17 or 18 or 19 or 20 in Q32))) AND
(actual hours worked was for one hour or more in the reference week (Q44 >= 1)))
OR
((were away from their job business or farm during the reference week (code 1 in Q21))
AND
((working for an employer (code 1 in Q54) AND received remuneration in wages or salary (code 1 in Q55)) OR
(their working/payment arrangement was either commission only OR commission with a retainer OR payment in kind OR paid by the piece/item produced OR wage OR salary earner OR other (code 14 or 15 or 17 or 18 or 19 or 20 in Q56))) AND
(usually works one hour or more (Q69 >= 1)))

- owner managers of incorporated enterprise with employees are those who
(((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q19)) AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q30)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 12 or 13 in Q32))) AND
(the business had employees (code 1 in Q37)) AND
(was an incorporated business (code 1 in Q38)) AND
(actual hours worked was for one hour or more in the reference week (Q44 >= 1)))
OR
((were away from their job, business, or farm during the reference week (code 1 in Q21))
AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q54) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 12 or 13 in Q56))) AND
(the business had employees (code 1 in Q61)) AND
(was an incorporated business (code 1 in Q62)) AND
(usually works one hour or more (Q69 >= 1)))
- owner managers of incorporated enterprise without employees are those who
(((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q19)) AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q30)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 12 or 13 in Q32))) AND
(the business did not have employees (code 5 in Q37)) AND
(was an incorporated business (code 1 in Q38)) AND
(actual hours worked was for one hour or more in the reference week (Q44 >= 1)))
OR
((were away from that job, business, or farm during the reference week (code 1 in Q21))
AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q54)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 12 or 13 in Q56))) AND

(the business did not have employees (code 5 in Q61)) AND
(was an incorporated business (code 1 in Q62)) AND
(usually works one hour or more (Q69 >= 1)))

- owner managers of unincorporated enterprise with employees are those who
 - ((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q19)) AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q30)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 12 or 13 in Q32))) AND
(the business had employees (code 1 in Q37)) AND
(was not an incorporated business (code 5 in Q38)) AND
(actual hours worked was for one hour or more in the reference week (Q44 >= 1)))
OR
((were away from that job, business, or farm during the reference week (code 1 in Q21))
AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q54)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor or own business/partnership (code 12 or 13 in Q56))) AND
(the business had employees (code 1 in Q61)) AND
(was not an incorporated business (code 5 in Q62)) AND
(usually works one hour or more (Q69 >= 1)))
- owner managers of unincorporated enterprise without employees are those who
 - ((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q19)) AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q30)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 12 or 13 in Q32))) AND
(the business did not have employees (code 5 in Q37)) AND
(was not an incorporated business (code 5 in Q38)) AND
(actual hours worked was for one hour or more in the reference week (Q44 >= 1)))
OR
((were away from that job, business, or farm during the reference week (code 1 in Q21))
AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q54)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 12 or 13 in Q56))) AND
(the business did not have employees (code 5 in Q61)) AND
(was not an incorporated business (code 5 in Q62)) AND
(usually works one hour or more (Q69 >= 1)))
- contributing family workers are those who
 - (respond that they worked without pay in a family business in the reference week (code 1 in Q20)) AND
(that their working arrangements are 'In a family business without pay' (code 16 in Q032)) AND
(actual hours worked was for one hour or more in the reference week (Q44 >= 1))

For the Household Survey Questionnaire Module

- employees are those who
 - ((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q2)) OR
(were away from that job, business, or farm last week (code 1 in Q4))) AND
((they worked for an employer (code 1 in Q7) and received remuneration in wages or salary (code 1 in Q8)) OR
(their working/payment arrangement was either commission only OR commission with a retainer OR payment in kind OR paid by the piece/item produced OR wage or salary earner OR other (code 5 or 6 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11 in Q9))) AND
(usual hours worked was one hour or more (Q12 >= 1))
- owner managers of incorporated enterprise with employees are those who
 - ((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q2)) OR
(were away from their job, business, or farm last week (code 1 in Q4))) AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q7)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor or own business/partnership (code 3 or 4 in Q9))) AND
(the business had employees (code 1 in Q10)) AND
(was an incorporated business (code 1 in Q11)) AND
(usual hours worked was one hour or more (Q12 >= 1))
- owner managers of incorporated enterprise without employees are those who
 - ((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q2)) OR
(were away from their job, business, or farm last week (code 1 in Q4))) AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q7)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 3 or 4 in Q9))) AND
(the business did not have employees (code 2 in Q10)) AND
(was an incorporated business (code 1 in Q11)) AND
(usual hours worked was one hour or more (Q12 >= 1))
- owner managers of unincorporated enterprise with employees are those who
 - ((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q2)) OR
(were away from their job, business, or farm last week (code 1 in Q4))) AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q7)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 3 or 4 in Q9))) AND
(the business had employees (code 1 in Q10)) AND
(was not an incorporated business (code 2 in Q11)) AND
(usual hours worked was one hour or more (Q12 >= 1))
- owner managers of unincorporated enterprise without employees are those who
 - ((respond that they worked last week in a job, business or farm (code 1 in Q2)) OR
(were away from their job, business, or farm last week (code 1 in Q4))) AND
((that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q7)) OR
(that their working/payment arrangement was contractor/sub-contractor OR own business/partnership (code 3 or 4 in Q9))) AND

(the business did not have employees (code 2 in Q10)) AND
(was not an incorporated business (code 2 in Q11)) AND
(usual hours worked was one hour or more (Q12 >= 1))

- contributing family workers are those who
 - (respond that they worked without pay in a family business in the reference week (code 1 in Q3)) AND
 - (that their working arrangements are 'In a family business without pay' (code 7 in Q9)) AND
 - (usual hours worked was one hour or more (Q12 = 1))

For the Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module

- employees are those who
 - (respond that they had a job and worked for pay or profit last week OR were absent from work (code 1 or 2 in Q1)) AND
 - (they worked for an employer (code 1 in Q2))
- owner managers of incorporated enterprise with employees are those who
 - (respond that they had a job and worked for payment or profit last week OR were absent from work (code 1 or 2 in Q1)) AND
 - |(that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q2)) AND
 - (the business was an incorporated business (code 2 in Q3)) AND
 - (had employees (code 2 or 3 in Q4))
- owner managers of incorporated enterprise without employees are those who
 - (respond that they had a job and worked for payment or profit last week OR were absent from work (code 1 or 2 in Q1)) AND
 - (that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q2)) AND
 - (the business was an incorporated business (code 2 in Q3)) AND
 - (had no employees (code 1 in Q4))
- owner managers of unincorporated enterprise with employees are those who
 - (respond that they had a job and worked for payment or profit last week OR were absent from work (code 1 or 2 in Q1)) AND
 - (that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q2)) AND
 - (the business was not an incorporated business (code 1 in Q3)) AND
 - (had employees (code 2 or 3 in Q4))
- owner managers of unincorporated enterprise without employees are those who
 - (respond that they had a job and worked for payment or profit last week OR were absent from work (code 1 or 2 in Q1)) AND
 - (that they worked in their own business (code 2 in Q2)) AND
 - (the business was not an incorporated business (code 1 in Q3)) AND
 - (had no employees (code 1 in Q4))
- contributing family workers are those who
 - respond that they worked without pay in a family business (code 3 in Q1)

Hours worked

Introduction

Measuring the levels and trends in hours worked for different groups of employed persons is important for monitoring working and living conditions, as well as analysing economic activity.

Information on hours worked also enables the classification of employed persons into full-time and part-time status. There are a number of different concepts of hours worked that are measured through ABS collections, which include actual hours, usual hours and hours paid for (both ordinary time hours and overtime hours). The ABS also produces a derived series of aggregate monthly hours worked.

This standard discusses the concepts related to hours worked as applied in the ABS Labour Force Survey (LFS) and other ABS collections. Definitions used by the ABS align closely with ILO's standards and guidelines, most notably the 18th ICLS Resolution on Working Time Arrangements (2008). In this resolution the concept of hours worked relates to the time when (paid) workers were at the disposal of an employer, that is, when the worker was available to receive work orders from an employer or person in authority, and covers all jobs. During such periods of availability, workers are expected to be ready to work if work is possible, requested or necessary. This general concept is meaningful for owner managers if it is taken to mean time when they are available to do their work, such as being at the disposal of clients, ready to receive purchase orders or available to make sales, etc. The ILO in its report 'Report II: Measurement of working time' for the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, discusses the concepts and definitions in measuring hours of work. The report provides a comprehensive guide to producing statistics on hours of work, including other related measures.

There are three core variables, which directly measure the concept of hours worked:

- Actual hours worked
- Usual hours worked
- Hours paid for.

In addition, derived measures of total hours of work over a month or quarter are increasingly important to provide a measure of the total volume of labour inputs to the economy, and how this is changing over time. As a result, there is a further measure of hours worked produced, aggregate monthly hours worked.

The three variables related to hours worked are all an attribute of the measurement unit person. However, for total hours, the hours worked can also be in reference to hours worked in a particular job.

Underlying concepts

Nominal definition

Actual hours worked

Actual hours worked refers to time spent at work during a specified reference period (e.g. a week), by all employed persons. According to the ICLS resolution on the measurement of working time, actual hours worked as measured within the System of National Accounts production boundary includes all time spent directly on, and in relation to, the performance of activities that contribute to the production of goods and services. Hours actually worked are the combined time that may be described as direct hours, related hours, in between hours, down time, and short resting time.

This standard includes:

- hours actually worked during normal periods of work
- time spent in addition to hours worked during normal periods of work, including overtime
- time spent at the place of work on activities such as the preparation and cleaning of the workplace, thinking about and discussing work processes and methods, putting on work clothing, repairs and maintenance, preparation and cleaning of tools and materials, and the preparation of receipts, time sheets and reports
- time spent at the place of work waiting or standing by due to machinery or process breakdown, accident, lack of supplies, power or internet access, etc.
- time corresponding to short rest periods (resting time), including tea and coffee breaks or prayer breaks
- travel time connected to work, excluding commuting time
- training and skills enhancement related to the job or employer.

This standard excludes:

- hours paid for but not worked such as paid annual leave, public holidays or paid sick leave
- meal breaks (lunch breaks)
- paid and unpaid time while 'on call'
- time spent on travel to and from work when no productive activity for the job is

- performed (commuting time)
- time off during working hours to attend outside educational activities, even if it is authorised, which are not connected to the job or employer.

Actual hours worked includes hours worked in all jobs for multiple job holders. For multiple job holders the Labour Force Survey collects a separate measure of actual hours worked in main job and all jobs.

Measures of actual hours worked are available from a number of ABS household surveys:

- the Labour Force Survey (LFS)
- labour-related supplementary topics to the LFS
- the Multi-Purpose Household Survey, and
- the Census of Population and Housing.

Measures of actual hours worked are not available from ABS business surveys.

Usual hours worked

Usual hours worked refers to the hours worked in a typical period, rather than the hours worked in a specified reference period. According to the ICLS resolution, 'weekly hours usually worked relate generally to the weekly hours most commonly or typically worked by persons during a reference period' such as an observation period of a month, quarter, season or year. The concept of usual hours applies both to persons at work and to persons temporarily absent from work.

Consideration must be taken when analysing usual hours worked due to the different interpretations respondents may have when considering the typical hours they work. The ILO recommends that the hours usually worked be determined as the modal (most frequently occurring) number of actually worked for a short reference period (e.g. per week) over a longer observation period (e.g. one month or a number of months), where meaningful. This allows for the representation of any overtime hours that are regularly carried out and also accounts for any absences that are only irregular in nature so they do not unduly conceal the typical schedule. Usual hours refers to the normal working pattern over a three month period. Overtime is included if it has been a regular part of the person's working arrangements over a three month period.

Work arrangements where the number of hours worked vary from week to week (e.g. casual workers, people on rotating shifts, etc) are becoming more prevalent. The ILO recommends

that when the modal value is not particularly meaningful, the median or mean should be used to determine the hours usually worked. If the mean or median number of hours actually worked is computed over a long period, then the weeks of unemployment or inactivity are to be excluded. Inactivity includes periods when the person is employed but did not work during the week (e.g. on leave, rostered out).

Measures of usual hours worked are available from:

- the LFS
- labour-related supplementary surveys
- Multi-Purpose Household Survey, and
- most Special Social Surveys.

Measures of usual hours worked are not available from ABS business surveys or the Census of Population and Housing.

Hours paid for

Hours paid for applies to persons working as employees or receiving remuneration in the form of wage and salary. Hours paid for is the time for which persons have received wage and salary payments from their employer (in cash or in kind) or from their business during a specified short or long reference period, regardless of whether the hours were actually worked or not.

Hours paid for:

- Includes time paid but not worked such as paid annual leave, paid public holidays and other paid absences (e.g. paid sick leave)
- Excludes time worked but not paid by the employer, such as unpaid overtime and absences that are not paid by the employer (e.g. unpaid educational leave or maternity leave that may be paid through transfers by government from social security systems)

Measures of average (mean) and median hours paid for (and average hourly earnings) are available from the ABS business survey Employee Earnings and Hours, and the ABS Labour Force supplementary survey Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership (up to August 2013) and Characteristics of Employment (from August 2014 onwards).

Aggregate monthly hours worked

Aggregate monthly hours worked estimates the total number of hours worked by employed persons in a calendar month. It is a derived measure which expresses the aggregate

number of hours actually worked by all persons in all jobs. Although derived from hours actually worked in a reference week, the aggregate monthly hours worked estimates are a more representative monthly measure, as it takes into account the number of business days and holidays in the month.

Aggregate monthly hours worked provides seasonally adjusted and trend measures of hours worked. Estimates may be aggregated across time to produce quarterly and annual estimates. Aggregate monthly hours worked allows direct comparison of hours worked across time. In contrast, actual and usual hours worked in the standard relate to hours worked in the survey reference week, which is the week prior to the survey interview. These actual and usual hours worked cannot be aggregated across time (e.g. to produce quarterly or annual estimates), as they only relate to a single week rather than the entire month.

Measures of aggregate monthly hours worked are only available from the ABS LFS. For details on the methodology used to compile the estimates, refer to [Information Paper: Expansions of Hours Worked Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2009](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/3F5ADAF65416FD7CCA25762A001D01FE?OpenDocument) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/3F5ADAF65416FD7CCA25762A001D01FE?OpenDocument>) (cat. no. 6290.0.55.001).

Operational definition

Actual hours worked

Actual hours worked is measured by counting the total number of completed hours actually worked (including any paid or unpaid overtime less any time off) in the week preceding the survey in a person's job(s). All extra hours worked are included, whether officially called overtime or not. Hours actually worked in main job, and in all jobs, are collected for multiple job holders. In the LFS, hours actually worked in the reference week are only asked of those who had a job and were at work in the reference week.

Usual hours worked

Usual hours worked are measured by counting the total number of completed hours usually worked (including any regular paid or unpaid overtime) per week. Usual hours worked are collected for all employed persons. For persons who had a job but were not at work during the reference week, only usual hours worked are collected.

Measurement of usual hours worked is straightforward for persons with relatively regular or steady work patterns from week to week. However, for persons where the number of working hours varies from week to week, consideration must be taken to ensure the most representative and appropriate measure of usual hours worked is recorded.

Based on the ILO guidelines, usual hours worked is determined as the modal (most frequently occurring) number of hours worked per week, where meaningful. For example, over the last three months if an employed person only rarely worked a varying number of hours, then the usual hours worked is the number of hours most frequently worked. However, the measurement of usual hours worked becomes more complex when people work different patterns of irregular numbers of hours. As recommended by the ILO, when the modal value is not particularly meaningful, the median (middle value) or mean (average) hours worked per week should be used to determine the hours usually worked. In practice, however, where the number of working hours varies from week to week over a longer period, the method to determine the usual number of hours worked needs careful consideration. The ILO further recommends that if the mean number of weekly hours worked is computed over a long period, then any weeks of unemployment or inactivity are to be excluded.

Table 4 - examples of usual hours worked

	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4
	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours
Wk 1	40	60	30	30
Wk 2	0	40	20	35
Wk 3	40	8	25	33
Wk 4	0	60	22	38
Wk 5	40	40	33	100
Wk 6	0	8	27	30
Wk 7	40	60	22	35
Wk 8	0	40	30	33
Wk 9	40	8	29	38
Wk 10	0	60	25	30
Modal	40	60	22	30
Median	20	40	26	34
Mean	20	36	26	40
Preferred	modal	mean or median	mean or median	median

In Example 1 above, an employee has an arrangement to work only one week per fortnight. The usual hours worked is 40 hours per week since the hours worked is considered only when the person is at work, rather than 20 hours per week (i.e. the average of 40 and 0). In example 2, an employed person works long shifts for two in every three weeks, and works substantially less hours in the third week. In this situation, the modal rule cannot be used.

Therefore, the mean (36 hours) or median (40 hours) should be used, and in this case are similar. In Example 3, a worker works a slightly varied number of hours every week. The modal rule would result in usual hours worked being 22, but this is clearly not representative since it is the lowest value of the wide distribution of hours. Thus, the mean or median of 26 hours is more meaningful than the mode. On the other hand in example 4, where the mode is not representative and where the mean may not be a good representation due to a one-off extreme value, the median of 34 hours is most meaningful.

In all situations, it is recommended that careful judgement be applied in order to arrive at values that are the most representative possible, consistent with the ILO's recommendation. There are circumstances that require consideration on which measurement best reflects the pattern of hours worked.

Hours paid for

Hours paid for refers to all the hours for which payment is received, this includes payment for time worked and for time not worked.

Measures of hours paid for are generally collected from business payroll records. In addition to total hours paid for, other components of hours paid for can be collected:

- Ordinary time hours paid for: the award, standard or agreed hours of work paid for at the ordinary rate. Ordinary hours paid for include: stand-by or reporting time hours which are part of standard hours of work, and hours of paid annual leave, paid sick leave and long service leave taken during the reference period. Ordinary time hours paid for at penalty rates (e.g. for shift work) are not converted to their ordinary time equivalent.
- Overtime hours paid for: hours paid for in excess of award, standard or agreed hours of work, at both standard and penalty rates.

Hours paid for (in main job and all jobs) can also be collected in household surveys.

Aggregate monthly hours worked

Aggregate monthly hours worked is a derived measure (i.e. a synthetic estimate) that expresses the aggregate number of hours worked by all persons in all jobs for each month of the calendar year. It differs from the actual and usual hours worked estimates since these refer only to the hours worked in the reference week. This measure is consistent with ILO's recommendation in its report 'Report II: Measurement of working time', as a preferred measure for labour market analysis.

For information on the methodology to produce aggregate monthly hours worked estimates refer to [Information Paper: Expansions of Hours Worked Estimates from the Labour Force](#)

[Survey \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/3F5ADAF65416FD7CCA25762A001D01FE?OpenDocument>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/3F5ADAF65416FD7CCA25762A001D01FE?OpenDocument) (cat. no. 6290.0.55.001).

Discussion of issues

It must first be established that the person is employed (see Labour Force Status - Collection Methods). Actual hours worked and usual hours worked are then determined for employed people.

Hours paid for can be collected for all employee jobs in business surveys, including both ordinary time hours paid and overtime hours paid. Hours paid for (in main job and/or all jobs) can also be collected for all employed people in household surveys.

Collection methods

Collection of variables

Scope

The variables actual hours worked and usual hours worked are applicable to all employed persons.

Hours paid for is applicable to the population of employees and owner managers of incorporated enterprises where payment is by wage and salary. There are some instances where hours paid for cannot be determined, such as when a person is employed by a business to complete a set task and payment is based on completion of the task without any reference to hours.

Question modules

Household survey modules

Hours actually worked and/or usually worked are collected for all employed persons. Hours paid for are collected for employees. Labour force status must first be established, as defined in the standard for Labour Force Status.

Questions relevant to measuring hours worked are:

Hours actually worked

HOW MANY HOURS DID ACTUALLY WORK IN (MAIN JOB/ALL JOBS) LAST WEEK (LESS THE TIME OFF) (BUT) (COUNTING THE EXTRA HOURS WORKED)?

a) 35 hours or more |__|__|

1-34 hours |__|__|

b) Less than 1 hour/no hours

Hours usually worked

HOW MANY HOURS DOES USUALLY WORK EACH WEEK IN (THAT JOB/THAT BUSINESS/ALL JOBS)?

a) 35 hours or more |__|__|

1-34 hours |__|__|

b) Less than 1 hour/no hours

Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module

Hours actually worked

LAST WEEK, HOW MANY HOURS DID YOU WORK IN ALL JOBS?

(Add any overtime or extra time worked and subtract any time off.)

Hours worked |__|__|

None

Other household surveys

(e.g. Survey of [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/99E5614783415356CA25713E000F92B1?OpenDocument>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/99E5614783415356CA25713E000F92B1?OpenDocument) (ceased) or Survey of Characteristics of Employment (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6333.0>))

Hours paid for

HOW MANY HOURS OF WORK, PAID LEAVE AND OVERTIME DID THAT LAST PAY COVER?

Hours |__|__|

Note: This question is usually asked after an earnings/payment question.

Business surveys

(e.g. Survey of [Employee Earnings and Hours \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6306.0/>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6306.0/)

Hours paid for

Ordinary time hours paid for

Note

- Report the number of award, standard or agreed hours of work which were actually paid for.
- Do not convert ordinary time hours paid for at penalty rates, e.g. shift hours, to their ordinary time equivalent.

Including

- Hours of paid leave relating to the pay period.

Excluding

- Overtime hours.
- Hours on stand-by or reporting time except when these are part of ordinary time hours.

|__|__|__| hrs |__|__| mins OR (if decimal) |__|__|__| . |__|__| hrs

Overtime hours paid for

Note

- Report the number of hours in excess of award, standard or agreed hours which were paid for.
- Do not convert overtime hours to their ordinary time equivalent, e.g. if 4 hours of overtime were paid at time and a half, the hours reported should be 4 and not 6.

Including

- Overtime hours paid at the standard rate and penalty rates.

Excluding

- Standard hours paid at penalty rate.
- Normal shift work.

|__|__|__| hrs |__|__| mins OR (if decimal) |__|__|__| . |__|__| hrs

Classification and coding

Coding

Input classification

The code structure is 1 to 99 hours with a separate response for less than 1 or no hours

1	1 hour
2	2 hours
3	3 hours
4	4 hours
...
99	99 hours and over

A separate code structure is used for persons working less than 1 or no hours

0	works 1 hour or more
1	worked less than 1 or no hours.

The classification criteria

The criteria used to classify units in the classification is complete hours worked. Fractions of an hour are disregarded.

The standard classification

Hours worked is a flat classification having only one level with 99 categories. The standard input classification is complete hours from 1 to 99 and over. A separate code structure is used for persons working less than one or no hours.

Output

Output classification

Standard output categories

Where the data supports detailed output, the standard output categories are:

- 0 hours
- 1 - 9 hours
- 10 - 19 hours
- 20 - 29 hours

30 - 34 hours
35 - 39 hours
40 - 44 hours
45 - 49 hours
50 - 59 hours
60 - 69 hours
70 hours and over

The standard output categories can also be expanded to provide additional detail, if supported:

0 hours	
1 - 9 hours	1 - 4 hours
	5 - 9 hours
10 - 19 hours	10 - 14 hours
	15 - 19 hours
20 - 29 hours	20 - 24 hours
	25 - 29 hours
30 - 34 hours	
35 - 39 hours	
40 - 44 hours	
45 - 49 hours	
50 - 59 hours	50 - 54 hours
	55 - 59 hours
60 - 69 hours	60 - 64 hours
	65 - 69 hours
70 hours and over	

However, these categories can be fully aggregated to:

0 hours
1 - 34 hours
35 hours and over

Other output categories can be considered, taking into account the distribution of hours worked.

Full-time part-time status

Introduction

Full-time/part-time status is widely used to categorise persons or jobs in terms of the number of hours worked. This status is of interest in understanding the nature of employment, particularly when cross-classified with socio-economic characteristics.

Full-time/part-time status is available from a number of ABS household surveys, including:

- the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS)
- various labour-related supplementary topics
- various Special Social Surveys, and
- the Census of Population and Housing.

Full-time/part-time status is also used in some ABS business surveys, such as the Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours.

Most ABS household surveys, including the LFS, define full-time/part-time status of employed persons in terms of the hours actually and/or usually worked (in all jobs). In some cases, a subjective approach based on respondents' perception of their full-time or part-time status is used. This approach is most often used where information is sought about work that is not currently being undertaken, and where recall problems may be encountered using a more objective approach.

ABS business surveys classify employee jobs, rather than people, as full-time or part-time. Classification of employee jobs as full-time or part-time is based on the employer's perception of whether the person has been engaged on a full-time or part-time basis.

Underlying concepts

Nominal definition

The standard term for this variable is Full-time/part-time status.

Full-time/part-time status is primarily an attribute of the measurement unit person. It is also relevant to the statistical unit job.

Full-time/part-time status is a classification of the relevant population according to whether they work on a full-time or part-time basis.

Operational definition

In household surveys where the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module is in use (see Labour Force Status standard for information), that is, where both actual and usual hours worked are collected, full-time employed people are those who:

- usually work 35 hours or more per week (in all jobs), or
- although usually working less than 35 hours a week, actually worked 35 hours or more during the reference week.

Part-time employed people are those who:

- usually work less than 35 hours per week and either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week.

In other household surveys, e.g. where the Household Survey Questionnaire Module is in use (see Labour Force Status standard for information) but only usual hours of work is collected, Full-time/part-time status is based on the total number of hours usually worked per week in all jobs. Full-time employed people are those who usually work 35 hours or more per week (in all jobs), while part-time employed people are those who usually work less than 35 hours per week (in all jobs).

Where only actual hours worked are collected, e.g. when the Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module is used, Full-time/part-time status is based on the actual hours worked in the reference week. Full-time employed people are those who worked 35 hours or more in the reference week (in all jobs), while part-time employed people are those who worked less than 35 hours in the reference week (in all jobs). Where actual hours worked is used, there is also a third category for people who are employed, but not at work in the reference week.

Where hours worked is not collected, e.g. where the single question is in use (see Labour Force Status standard for information), Full-time/part-time status is based on the respondent's perception of whether they work full-time or part-time; however, this method is not considered a standard. Guidance can be given to refer to a 35 hour per week threshold to be full-time.

In business surveys, Full-time/part-time status is collected for employee jobs. Full-time employee jobs are defined as those where the occupant normally works the agreed or award hours for a full-time employee in their occupation. If agreed or award hours do not apply, the job is regarded as full-time if the occupant usually works 35 hours or more per week. Part-time employee jobs are those where the occupant normally work less than the agreed or award hours for a full-time employee in their occupation. If agreed or award hours do not apply, the job is regarded as part-time if the occupant usually works less than 35 hours per week.

Discussion of issues

In comparison with the estimates of Full-time/part-time status from the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module, the Household Survey Questionnaire Module results in lower estimates of persons employed full-time, and higher estimates of persons employed part-time. This is because the Household Survey Questionnaire Module does not include a question on actual hours worked in the reference week, so it's not possible to include persons who usually work part-time, but who worked full-time hours in the reference week, in the estimate of persons employed full-time.

Usual hours worked is used in the Household Survey Questionnaire Module because it can be meaningfully asked of all employed persons, whether or not they are at work during the reference week. Asking only one question for hours worked minimises the size of the question set and avoids complex sequencing.

Collection methods

Collection of variable

Scope

The variable Full-time/part-time status is applicable to the statistical unit person and is relevant to all employed persons. It can also relate to the status of a previous job for a person not currently employed. It is also applicable for employee jobs.

Questionnaire modules

Household surveys

In household collections, Full-time/part-time status is derived for employed persons by asking, as appropriate, the questions on hours actually worked and/or hours usually worked in the reference week (as described in the Underlying Concepts section of this standard). The questions used to collect hours actually worked and hours usually worked are shown in

the Hours Worked standard.

Where the single question (subjective) approach to Full-time/part-time status is used, the following question can be used:

DO/DOES ... WORK FULL-TIME?

Yes

No

Varies/Don't know

In business surveys, the following question is used:

DOES THIS EMPLOYEE WORK FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME?

Full-time

Part-time

Note: Full-time employees usually work the agreed or award hours for a full-time employee in their occupation. If agreed or award hours do not apply, employees should be regarded as full-time if they usually work 35 hours or more a week (including casuals).

Derivation procedures

The derivation process to determine Full-time/part-time Status depends on which question set is being used.

Where the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module is in use, and both usual hours worked and actual hours worked are collected, the following derivation is used:

	= 1 (Full-time)	if usual hours \geq 35 or actual hours \geq 35
Full-time/part-time status	= 2 (Part-time)	if usual hours $<$ 35 and actual hours $<$ 35

Where the Household Survey Questionnaire Module is in use, and only usual hours worked is collected, the following derivation is used:

	= 1 (Full-time)	if usual hours ≥ 35
Full-time/part-time status	= 2 (Part-time)	if usual hours < 35

Where only actual hours worked are collected (Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module), the following derivation is used:

	= 1 (Full-time)	if actual hours ≥ 35
Full-time/part-time status	= 2 (Part-time)	0 < actual hours < 35
	= 3 (Employed, not at work)	if actual hours = 0 (Employed, not at work)

Supporting variables

The variables needed to derive Full-time/part-time status in household surveys are Labour force status, usual hours worked and actual hours worked (as described above).

Application of the classification to other variables

The variable Full-time/part-time status generally relates to the hours worked by employed persons (in all jobs). The classification may also be applied to a person's full-time/part-time status in relation to main job, last job or second job, or to whether a person is looking for full-time or part-time work. It is also relevant to a person's previous job if they are not currently employed.

Classifications and coding

Input classification

Full-time/part-time status is a flat classification with two categories for employed persons:

1. Full-time
2. Part-time

Where Full-time/part-time status is based on actual hours worked, a third category is included:

3. Employed, not at work

Output

Output classification

The output categories are derived from input categories, which identify whether a person has Full-time/part-time status.

The standard output categories are:

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time

Where Full-time/part-time status is based on actual hours worked, a third output category is included:

- Employed, not at work
-

Duration of Job Search

Introduction

The number of unemployed persons is an important social and economic indicator. The duration of job search, that is, the length of time unemployed persons have been looking for work or since they last worked (previously referred to as duration of unemployment), is also important from both an economic and social perspective. Long-term unemployment (where duration of job search is 52 weeks or more) is of particular social concern due to the consequences of being out of work for long periods, such as financial hardship and the loss of relevant skills. From an economic perspective, the longer people are unemployed the less likely they are going to be able to contribute to the economy.

Since 1960, the ABS Labour Force Survey has collected information about duration of unemployment for unemployed persons. The survey asks those who are currently unemployed about the length, in whole weeks, of the current period of looking for work and/or the time since their last job. The name of this item changed from Duration of unemployment to Duration of job search with the 2014 standards revision.

The definition of Duration of job search used by the ABS aligns closely with [international standards](https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/standards-and-guidelines/resolutions-adopted-by-international-conferences-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_230304/lang--en/index.htm) (https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/standards-and-guidelines/resolutions-adopted-by-international-conferences-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_230304/lang--en/index.htm) (19th ICLS resolution (2013) concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilisation).

The name of the variable is Duration of job search.

Underlying concepts

Nominal definition

Duration of job search is defined as the elapsed period (to the end of the reference week) since the person began looking for work, or since the person last worked, whichever is shorter. For persons who may have begun looking for work while still employed, the Duration of job search is defined as the period from the time the person last worked to the end of the reference week.

Duration of job search can be used to define the population long-term unemployed. Long-term unemployed are those people who have a Duration of job search of 52 weeks or more.

The measure is of current and continuing periods of unemployment for people who are unemployed in the survey reference week. It does not measure the length of completed spells of unemployment.

Operational definition

Duration of job search is measured according to the following rules.

After a person has been identified as unemployed, the Duration of job search is calculated by:

- Obtaining the date the person began looking for work and calculating the number of weeks between the date and the end of the reference week.
- Obtaining the date the person last worked and calculating the number of weeks between the date and the end of the reference week.
- Comparing the time periods and taking the shortest of the two as the Duration of job search.

All data are converted to, and stored in, whole weeks for the Duration of job search data item.

Collection methods

Collection of variable

Scope

Duration of job search is an attribute of the measurement unit person. Duration of job search is a characteristic of people whose current labour force status is unemployed.

Questionnaire modules

Household surveys

In household surveys, Duration of job search is derived for all persons whose Labour force status is unemployed. The questions used to determine whether a person is unemployed are shown in the Labour Force Status standard. The standard questions used to collect Duration of job search in household surveys are:

WHEN DID ... BEGIN LOOKING FOR WORK?

Enter Date	
Less than 2 years ago/...../..... DD MM YY
2 years to less than 5 years ago/..... MM YY
5 years or more ago YY
Did not look for work	<input type="checkbox"/>

WHEN DID ... LAST WORK?

Enter Date	
Less than 2 years ago/...../..... DD MM YY
2 years to less than 5 years ago/..... MM YY
5 years or more ago YY
Has never worked	<input type="checkbox"/> No More Questions

Duration of job search is not contained in the Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire Module.

Derivation procedures

The derivation of Duration of job search is based on responses to two questions, which are used to derive elapsed duration since the person began looking for work and elapsed duration since the person last worked. Duration of job search is assigned to the shorter period of these two elapsed durations.

Supporting variables

Labour force status is needed to derive Duration of job search.

Classification and coding

Input classification

The standard classification is a flat numerical structure with duration in whole weeks.

0 = Not unemployed/Not applicable

1 = 1 week

2 = 2 weeks

3 = 3 weeks

...

...

3119 = 3119 weeks

3120 = 3120 weeks

Note: Duration of less than 1 week is rounded up 1 week.

The code structure

The code structure of the classification is:

0 = Not unemployed/Not applicable

1 = 1 week

2 = 2 weeks

3 = 3 weeks

...

...

3119 = 3119 weeks

3120 = 3120 weeks

Output

Output classification

Standard output categories

There is a single main standard output grouping of Duration of job search data. The standard output categories are:

Under 4 weeks
4 weeks and under 13 weeks
13 weeks and under 26 weeks
26 weeks and under 52 weeks
52 weeks and over
52 weeks and under 104 weeks
104 weeks and over

Depending on the quality of data and specific purposes, the output categories can also be collapsed into a number of combinations:

Under 13 weeks
13 weeks and under 52 weeks and
52 weeks and over
Under 52 weeks and
52 weeks and over
52 weeks and under 104 weeks
104 weeks and over
Under 52 weeks and
52 weeks and over

Duration of job search of 52 weeks and over can be labelled as Long-term unemployed.

Glossary

Show all

The definitions in this glossary are from the ABS monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS), and as such reflect both the concepts outlined in this standard, as well as the scope and coverage of the LFS and the level of detail collected in the Labour Force Survey Questionnaire Module.

Actively looking for work

Actively looked for work includes:

- written, telephoned or applied to an employer for work
- had an interview with an employer for work

- answered an advertisement for a job
- checked or registered with an employment agency
- taken steps to purchase or start your own business
- advertised or tendered for work, and
- contacted friends or relatives in order to obtain work.

Actual hours worked

Actual hours of work refers to a specified reference period (e.g. a week) and includes:

- hours actually worked during normal periods of work
- time spent in addition to hours worked during normal periods of work (including overtime)
- time spent at the place of work on activities such as the preparation of the workplace, repairs and maintenance, preparation and cleaning of tools, and the preparation of receipts, time sheets and reports
- time spent at the place of work waiting or standing by due to machinery or process breakdown, accident, lack of supplies, power or internet access, etc
- time corresponding to short rest periods (resting time) including tea and coffee breaks or prayer breaks
- travel time connected to work (excluding commuting time), and
- training and skills enhancement related to the job or employer.

Excluded are:

- hours paid for but not worked, such as paid annual leave, public holidays or paid sick leave
- meal breaks (e.g. lunch breaks)
- paid and unpaid time 'on call'
- time spent on travel to and from work when no productive activity for the job is performed (e.g. commuting time), and
- time off during working hours to attend outside educational activities, even if it is authorised, e.g. those not connected to the job or employer.

For multiple job holders the LFS collects a separate measure of actual hours worked in main job and in all jobs.

Aggregate monthly hours worked

Aggregate monthly hours worked measures the total number of actual hours worked by employed persons in a calendar month. It differs from the actual hours worked estimates (and the usual hours worked estimates) since these refer only to the hours worked in the reference week. The methodology used to produce aggregate monthly hours worked means that these are synthetic estimates.

Further information on the methodology used to produce the aggregate monthly hours worked estimates is available on the ABS website in [Information Paper: Expansions of Hours Worked Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2009](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/3F5ADAF65416FD7CCA25762A001D01FE?OpenDocument) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/3F5ADAF65416FD7CCA25762A001D01FE?OpenDocument>) (cat. no. 6290.0.55.001).

Civilian population aged 15 years and over

All usual residents of Australia aged 15 years and over except members of the permanent defence forces, certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments customarily excluded from census and estimated population counts, overseas residents in Australia, and members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia.

Contributing family worker

Persons who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative.

Current job

A job that a person was working in during the reference week which had lasted or was likely to last for a period of two weeks or more.

Current main job

The job that a person was working in during the reference week in which most hours were usually worked.

Current other job

Refers to a current job other than the current main job.

Currently available for work

Currently available for work is defined as being available for work in the reference week.

Currently economically active

A person is considered to be economically active if that person contributes or is available and seeking to contribute to the production of goods and services that fall within the

System of National Accounts production boundary. The currently economically active population is equivalent to the total labour force, and consists of the total number of persons defined as employed and unemployed. The currently economically active population is measured during a specified short period of time, and in Australia is based on the concept of usual residency of the civilian population aged 15 years and over.

The currently economically active population excludes:

- persons under the age of 15 years
- permanent members of the defence forces
- short term visitors to Australia, and
- persons not in the labour force.

Duration of current period of unemployment

The period of time from when an unemployed person began looking for work until the end of the reference week, or the period of time since an unemployed person last worked in any job for two weeks or more until the end of the reference week, whichever was the shorter period. Brief periods of work (of less than two weeks) since the person began looking for work are disregarded.

Duration of job search

The current and continuing period of unemployment for persons who are unemployed in the reference week. Duration of job search measures the elapsed number of weeks to the end of the reference week since an unemployed person began looking for work, or since that person last worked, whichever is the shorter. For persons who began looking for work while still employed, it is the period from the time the person last worked to the end of the reference week.

Duration of looking for work before current job

The number of weeks or years that employed persons were looking for work before being offered their current job or starting their own business. For employed persons who had worked before, it includes any time they were looking for work before leaving their previous employer.

Employee job

A job for which the occupant receives remuneration in wages, salary, payment in kind, or piece rates.

Employee

Employees are persons who:

- worked for a public or private employer, and
- received remuneration in wages or salary, or
- are paid a retainer fee by their employer and worked on a commission basis, for tips, piece rates or payment in kind.

In some instances, employees also include Owner Managers of Incorporated Enterprises (OMIEs).

Employed

All persons aged 15 years and over who met one of the following criteria during the reference week:

- Worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind, in a job or business or on a farm (employees and owner managers of incorporated or unincorporated enterprises).
- Worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (contributing family workers).
- Were employees who had a job but were not at work and were:
 - away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week, or
 - away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four week period to the end of the reference week, or
 - away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement, or
 - on strike or locked out, or
 - on workers' compensation and expected to return to their job.
- Were owner managers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.

Employed full-time

Includes employed persons who usually worked 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and those who, although usually working less than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more during the reference week.

Employed part-time

Includes employed persons who usually worked less than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week.

Full-time/part-time status

Full-time/part-time status is determined by the actual and/or usual number of hours worked by an employed person in the reference week in all jobs. For unemployed persons, it is determined whether the work sought is full-time or part-time. Full-time work is defined as 35 hours or more per week.

Full-time workers

Employed persons who usually worked 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and others who, although usually working fewer than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more during the reference week.

Hours paid for

The number of hours for which employees and owner managers of incorporated enterprises (OMIEs) were paid in their main job in their last pay, not necessarily the number of hours actually worked during the reference week (e.g. a person on paid leave for the week was asked to report the number of hours for which they were paid).

Hours usually worked

The number of hours usually worked in a week.

Hours worked

The number of hours actually worked during the reference week.

Household

One or more persons usually resident in the same private dwelling.

Incorporated enterprise

An enterprise which is registered as a separate legal entity to its members or owners (also known as a limited liability company).

Job

Any paid employment, full-time or part-time, lasting two weeks or more.

Labour force

The labour force is the labour supply available for the production of economic goods and

services in a given period, and is the most widely used measure of the economically active population. Persons in the labour force are classified as either employed or unemployed, as defined.

Labour force status

A classification of the civilian population aged 15 years and over into employed, unemployed or not in the labour force, as defined. The definitions conform closely to the international standard definitions adopted by the International Conferences of Labour Statisticians.

Long-term unemployed

Persons whose duration of current period of unemployment is 52 weeks or over.

Market sector

The market sector is an industry grouping comprising the following industries: Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Mining; Manufacturing; Electricity, gas, water and waste services; Construction; Wholesale trade; Retail trade; Accommodation and food services; Transport, postal and warehousing; Information media and telecommunications; Finance and insurance services; Rental, hiring and real estate services; Professional, scientific and technical services; Administrative and support services; Arts and recreation services; and Other services. Refer to [Australian National Accounts: Concepts, Sources and Methods \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5216.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5216.0) (cat. no. 5216.0).

Monthly hours worked in all jobs

Monthly hours worked in all jobs measures the total number of actual hours worked by employed persons in a calendar month. It differs from the actual hours worked estimates (and the usual hours worked estimates) since these refer only to the hours worked in the reference week.

The methodology used to produce monthly hours worked in all jobs means that these are synthetic estimates. Seasonally adjusted and trend estimates of monthly hours worked in all jobs are available for the period July 1978 onwards.

Actual and usual hours worked cannot be aggregated across time to produce either quarterly or annual estimates as they relate to only a single week in the month. In contrast, monthly hours worked in all jobs estimates are a true monthly measure, and may be aggregated across time to produce both quarterly and annual estimates.

Further information on the methodology used to produce the monthly hours worked in all jobs estimates refer to [Information Paper: Expansion of Hours Worked Estimates from the](#)

[Labour Force Survey \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6290.0.55.001Main+Features12009?OpenDocument>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6290.0.55.001Main+Features12009?OpenDocument)(cat. no. 6290.0.55.001).

Multiple jobholder

Employed persons who, during the reference week, worked in more than one job. Multiple jobholders exclude those who changed employer during the reference week. People who were unpaid voluntary workers or on unpaid trainee/work placement in their second job were excluded from the multiple jobholder population.

Not available to start work

Refers to people who were not available to start work with more hours either in the reference week, or in the four weeks following the interview.

Non-market Sector

The non-market sector is an industry grouping comprising the following industries: Education and training; Public administration & safety; and Health care and social assistance. Refer to [Australian National Accounts: Concepts, Sources and Methods \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5216.0>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5216.0)(cat. no. 5216.0)

Not in the labour force

Persons who were not in the categories employed or unemployed, as defined. They include people who undertook unpaid household duties or other voluntary work only, were retired, voluntarily inactive and those permanently unable to work.

Owner managers of incorporated enterprises (OMIEs)

People who work in their own incorporated enterprise, that is, a business entity which is registered as a separate legal entity to its members or owners (may also be known as a limited liability company). An owner manager of an incorporated enterprise may or may not hire one or more employees in addition to themselves and/or other owners of that business.

Owner managers of unincorporated enterprises (OMUEs)

Person who operates their own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade. An owner manager of an unincorporated enterprise may or may not hire one or more employees in addition to themselves and/or other owners of that business.

Paid leave entitlements

The entitlement of employees to either paid holiday leave, paid sick leave in their main job.

Part-time workers

Employed persons who usually worked fewer than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and who either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week.

Persons in the labour force

Persons who were classified as being in the labour force, that is, either employed or unemployed.

Persons not in the labour force

Persons who were not classified as employed or unemployed. Persons not in the labour force can be divided into those who are marginally attached to the labour force, and those who are not. Persons who are marginally attached to the labour force satisfy some, but not all, of the criteria required to be classified as unemployed.

Persons not in the labour force are considered to be marginally attached to the labour force if they:

- wanted to work and were actively looking for work (but, unlike unemployed persons, were not available to start work in the reference week), or
- wanted to work and were not actively looking for work but were available to start work within four weeks.

Persons not in the labour force are not marginally attached to the labour force if they:

- did not want to work, or
- wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were not available to start work within four weeks.

Quarterly hours worked in all jobs

Quarterly hours worked in all jobs is a three month aggregate of monthly hours worked in all jobs. It shows the total number of actual hours worked by all employed persons in a period of three calendar months.

Reference week

The week preceding the week in which the interview was conducted.

Response rate

The number of fully responding dwellings expressed as a percentage of the total number of dwellings excluding sample loss. Examples of sample loss include: dwellings where all persons are out of scope and/or coverage; vacant dwellings; dwellings under construction; dwellings converted to non-dwellings; derelict dwellings; and demolished dwellings.

Seasonally adjusted series

A time series of estimates with the estimated effects of normal seasonal variation removed.

Status in employment

Status in employment is determined by an employed person's position in relation to their job, and is usually in respect of a person's main job if they hold more than one job.

Employed persons are classified according to the reported relationship between the person and the enterprise for which they work, together with the legal status of the enterprise where this can be established. The groups include:

- Employees
- Owner manager of incorporated enterprise (OMIEs) with employees
- Owner manager of incorporated enterprise (OMIEs) without employees
- Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise (OMUEs) with employees
- Owner manager of unincorporated enterprise (OMUEs) without employees, and
- Contributing family workers.

Time since last job

The elapsed time since ceasing the last job.

Total hours paid for

The sum of ordinary time hours paid for plus overtime hours paid for.

Trend series

A smoothed seasonally adjusted series of estimates.

Unemployed

Persons aged 15 years and over who were not employed during the reference week, and:

- had actively looked for full time or part time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and were available for work in the reference week, or
- were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

Unemployment rate

The number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

Unincorporated enterprise

A business entity in which the owner and the business are legally inseparable, so that the owner is liable for any business debts that are incurred.

Usual hours worked

Usual hours of work refers to a typical period rather than the hours worked in a specified reference period. The concept of usual hours applies both to persons at work and to persons temporarily absent from work, and is defined as the hours worked during a typical week or day. Actual hours worked (for a specific reference period) may differ from usual hours worked due to illness, vacation, strike, overtime work, a change of job, or similar reasons.

Workers' compensation

Workers' compensation includes:

- payments by an insurer or other liable party for costs related to a work-related injury or illness
 - medical payments, incapacity payments (income maintenance and salary top-up), rehabilitation payments, travel payments and legal payments, and
 - any 'settlement' or 'judgment of claim'.
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Abbreviations

[Show all](#)

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASNA	Australian System of National Accounts
cat. no.	Catalogue number of an ABS publication
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
ICSE	International Classification of Status in Employment
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MPHS	Multipurpose Household Survey
MPS	Monthly Population Survey
N/A	Not Applicable
NILF	Not in the Labour Force
PNILF	Persons Not In the Labour Force
Q.	Question(s)
SNA	System of National Accounts
SSS	Special Social Survey

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